

Message Text

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ORIGIN OPR-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 PC-01 AID-05 A-01 PER-01 IO-10 SCCT-01 SY-04

EB-07 OC-05 CCO-00 SCS-03 USSS-00 SCA-01 EUR-12 AF-06

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TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

ALL NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 026057

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AEMR, ET

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

1. VIOLENCE ERUPTED IN ETHIOPIA'S RED SEA COAST PROVINCE
OF ERITREA ON JANUARY 31 WHEN ERITREAN INSURGENTS ATTACKED
ETHIOPIAN FORCES STATIONED IN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF ASMARA.
ATTACK CAME AFTER FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE MEANINGFUL
NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TWO SIDES. VIOLENT CONFRONTATION
PROBABLY SET ON COURSE BY NOVEMBER 23 EXECUTION BY JUNIOR
OFFICERS OF PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (PMG) HEAD AMAN
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ANDOM, AN ERITREAN WHO HAD DEMONSTRATED SOME FLEXIBILITY ON
QUESTION OF AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA.

2. ELF ATTACK TRIGGERED MASSIVE REACTION ON PART OF 15,000 ETHIOPIAN TROOPS IN AND AROUND ASMARA WHO REPORTEDLY BEGAN SHOOTING AT RANDOM. ARMY CARRIED OUT HOUSE TO HOUSE SEARCH FOR ELF SYMPATHIZERS AND ENGAGED IN CONSIDERABLE LOOTING. CASUALTIES ON ALL SIDES IN ASMARA ESTIMATED AT 400, INCLUDING MANY CIVILIANS. DURING COURSE OF FIGHTING, ASMARA ELECTRICITY AND WATER SYSTEMS WERE DISABLED AND REMAIN OUT OF ORDER. WATER SHORTAGE BECOMING CRITICAL AND FOOD SUPPLIES RUNNING LOW.

3. ETHIOPIAN ARMY CONVOY INCLUDING 50 TANKS AND 20 APC'S NOW ENROUTE TO REINFORCE ETHIOPIAN FORCES. ADDITIONAL 750 TROOPS HAVE BEEN AIRLIFTED TO ASMARA. FIGHTING IS CONTINUING NORTH OF ASMARA, BUT HAS SUBSIDED FOR PRESENT IN ASMARA ITSELF. PROSPECTS FOR EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT ARE SLIGHT.

4. ALTHOUGH NOT APPARENTLY THE TARGET OF ANY ATTACK AMERICAN PERSONNEL WERE PLACED IN CONSIDERABLE DANGER BY THE FIGHTING WHICH ON OCCASION TOOK PLACE IN AREAS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL AND THE INSTALLATIONS OF THE NAVY COMMUNICATIONS UNIT AT KAGNEW. THEIR SITUATION WAS FURTHER WORSENER BY SHORTAGES OF POWER, FOOD AND WATER. ON FEBRUARY 4, CONSEQUENTLY, ABOUT 120 AMERICAN CITIZENS, INCLUDING ALL DEPENDENTS OF USG PERSONNEL WERE EVACUATED BY AIR FROM ASMARA TO ADDIS ABABA. A NUMBER OF BRITISH AND CANADIANS WERE EVACUATED AT SAME TIME. OVER 100 AMERICANS REMAIN IN ASMARA, MOSTLY DOD PERSONNEL AND CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS AT KAGNEW STATION. KAGNEW STATION OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A MINIMUM BY THE POWER AND WATER SHORTAGE. KISSINGER

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